BILIARY ATRESIA (BA)

WHAT IS BA?

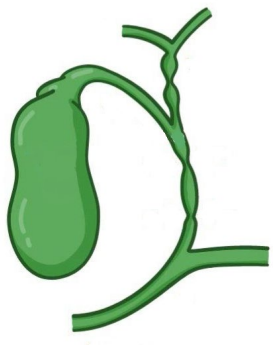
BA is a rare cholestatic liver disease with an estimated 400–600 new cases diagnosed in the U.S. each year.[1]

Babies born with BA have bile ducts that are blocked and scarred, causing bile to build up and damage the liver, gallbladder, and spleen.

~16%
of babies with BA also have other birth defects.

The cause of BA is unknown

Researchers are still working to uncover the exact cause of BA, but problems with the immune system, exposure to toxins, infections, and new (not inherited) genetic changes each may have a role.[1]



Babies are more likely to be female and/or to have Asian or African-American heritage.[2]

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

When bile builds up in the body it can cause the skin and the whites of a baby's eyes to become yellow, known as jaundice.

Jaundice is frequently the first sign of BA and typically appears in the first **3-6 weeks** of life. Symptoms such as poor weight gain, irritability, and increased blood pressure in certain veins may also appear.[2]

6–10
WEEKS OF AGE
is when additional symptoms usually appear.

To diagnose BA, a doctor will ask about an infant's medical and family history, perform a physical exam, and order a series of tests, including a liver biopsy.[1]

LIVING WITH BA

Although there is no cure, a timely diagnosis and surgical intervention can help.[1]

The damage BA causes in the liver can interfere with a child's ability to absorb protein, nutrients, and vitamins. A child may lose their appetite or become too sick to eat, requiring special feeding plans and sometimes a feeding tube.[3]

Doctors treat BA with a surgery called the Kasai procedure to create a conduit allowing biliary drainage, but eventually, in most cases, a liver transplant is needed. The other treatment is symptomatic and supportive, and new therapies are needed to delay or avoid the need for a liver transplant.[2]

AT LEAST
80%
of people living with BA have progressive disease and will require a liver transplant by age 20 years.[4]

APPROXIMATELY
90%
of infants with BA survive to adulthood, and almost all have portal hypertension or other complications of cirrhosis.[2]

For more support information and resources, visit:
BA Hero or BARE

References

1. https://rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/extrahepatic-biliary-atresia
2. https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/liver-disease/biliary-atresia
3. https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=biliary-atresia-90-P01982
4. Lykavieris P. Heptology. 2005; 4 (2):366-371